

**UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 5**

DATE: March 10, 2000

SUBJECT: Reports of Significant Developments and Activities
Ending on March 3, 2000

FROM: William E. Muno, Director
Superfund Division

TO: Francis X. Lyons
Regional Administrator

David A. Ullrich
Deputy Regional Administrator

The activities listed below are organized by site-specific activities, other significant developments, and training/conferences:

SITE-SPECIFIC ACTIVITIES

**Response (Acid Release), Indian Refinery - Texaco
Lawrenceville Site, Lawrenceville, Illinois**

On February 10, 2000, while collecting samples at the Indian Refinery - Texaco Lawrenceville site in Lawrenceville, Illinois, Remedial Project Manager (RPM) Matt Ohl was informed by the landowner that a waste acid spill had occurred and was not being addressed by the demolition contractor, Blastco, who previously purchased all above-ground tanks and other structures. Approximately 270,000 gallons of acid with a pH of 1 to 2 was on the ground and a 1.6 million gallon tank was leaking additional acid. A gate valve submerged below the pool of acid led to an oil water separator and ultimately to the Embarras River. The landowner expected that the oil water separator would not be able to treat the volume of waste acid and that releases to the river would occur when the valve failed. The RPM requested that the demolition contractor arrange for immediate removal of the acid. With intensive oversight, the demolition contractor began to remove the acid with vacuum trucks and place it in on-site tanks for temporary storage. The RPM ensured that the contractor continued the operations 24-hours per day through the weekend and into the

following week. Paul Atkociunas of Ecology and Environment arrived at the site on February 13, 2000, to assist with oversight. Most of the spilled acid has been neutralized

and acid saturated soils have been removed. The acid and soils are expected to be disposed of off-site pending analytical results.

Contacts: Matt Ohl (312-886-4442)
Tom Martin (312-886-4273)

**Emergency Response (Chemical Containers in a Residence),
Winthrop Harbor, Illinois**

On March 1, 2000, the Winthrop Harbor Police Department requested assistance from the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to deal with chemicals found in a residential home during the execution of a search warrant. The resident was involved with the manufacture of pyrotechnic devices. On-Scene Coordinator (OSC) Benning along with the Superfund Technical Assistance and Response Team (START) and Emergency and Rapid Response Services (ERRS) contractors removed approximately 265 small containers of chemicals from the house. The items included acids, nitrates, chlorates, sodium, red phosphorus, flammable liquids, and other various oxidizers. The hazardous substances were sorted, packaged, and removed from the property for appropriate disposal. Based on the individuals' activities, the home was also inspected by the Cook County Bomb Squad and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) to insure that no explosive devices were present.

Contact: Bradley Benning (312-353-7613)

Response (Oil Release), Downers Grove, Illinois

On February 29, 2000, On-Scene Coordinators (OSCs) Sam Borries and Fred Bartman, Environmental Scientist Keith Lesinak, and Public Affairs Specialist Ginny Narsete responded to an on-going oil release into St. Joseph Creek in downtown Downers Grove, Illinois. The source of the oil is suspected to be an underground fuel oil storage tank from a residential or commercial property. The exact source has not been identified at this time. U.S. EPA continues to work with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, Downers Grove Fire

Department, State Fire Marshall, and local officials to investigate and remediate the oil in the creek. Ginny Narsete continues to work with local officials to keep the nearby residents informed of on-going activities. Eight unused underground storage tanks on residential and commercial properties were identified and the remaining oil pumped out of the tanks. All parties continue to monitor the creek and, when necessary, U.S. EPA provides the Emergency Response Removal Contractor to remove oil from the creek. As the Spring rains approach and the ground thaws, it is expected that additional oil will be flushed through the system. If one of the aforementioned tanks is not the source, additional activities are planned to investigate and locate the source.

Contacts: Fred Bartman (312-886-0776)
Sam Borries (312-353-2886)
Ginny Narsete (312-886-4359)

Radiation Detected, North Columbus Drive Site, Chicago, Illinois

During the weeks of February 21 and 28, 2000, the Superfund Emergency Response staff initiated a radiation survey and sample collection at the North Columbus Drive site in downtown Chicago, Illinois. Very high survey results were detected throughout the site at the surface and to depths of 8 feet. The contaminant is believed to be thorium and is potentially connected to the Lindsay Light II site across the street. The Lindsey Light II site potentially responsible parties (PRP's) are completing a removal under a Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA) Section 106 Unilateral Administrative Order (UAO). The Section 106 UAO requires the PRPs to conduct off-site surveillance and cleanup as necessary. Until the North Columbus Drive property owner is added to the existing UAO, staff are working to secure cooperation from the developer (the prime contractor), the City of Chicago, and a potentially responsible party to close the site, secure it, develop an investigatory plan, develop a plan to deal with the contaminants, and institute a health and safety plan.

Contacts: Fred Micke (312-886-5123)
Verneta Simon (312-886-3601)
Larry Jensen (312-886-5026)
Mary Fulghum (312-886-4683)

OTHER SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS

Regional Administrator Visit, Grosse Ile, Michigan

On February 24, 2000, Regional Administrator, Francis X. Lyons, visited Response Section 1's Grosse Ile offices as part of his visit to the Detroit-Southeast Michigan area. Staff demonstrated functions of the new Emergency Operations Center and made multimedia presentations of recent response and site activities. A tour of the facility, including the Office of Research and Development Large Lakes Research areas, was made. A windshield survey of Brownfield and other environmental problems was provided during the drive to and from Grosse Ile.

Contact: Jason El-Zein (734-692-7661)

U.S. EPA and the United States Coast Guard Helicopter Overflight, Detroit River and Lower Rouge River, Detroit, Michigan

On February 16, 2000, the U.S. EPA, Emergency Response Section, in cooperation with the United States Coast Guard, Marine Safety Office, Detroit, conducted an overflight of the Detroit River and Lower Rouge River. On-Scene Coordinator Kurt Grunert scheduled and participated in the overflight of the City of Detroit. The purpose of the mission was to photograph and document sensitive environmental areas of the City of Detroit as part of the Regional Administrator's visit to Grosse Ile, Michigan, and take aerial photographs of Superfund removal sites along the Detroit River. In addition, aerial photographs of a Superfund removal project, Reclamation Oil Company, located in Detroit, were taken as part of a geographic information system project being conducted between Emergency Response Section 1 and the Fields Section. Another overflight is being scheduled to further document sites and facilities north of the Detroit area.

Contact: Kurt Grunert (734-692-7684)

TRAINING/CONFERENCES

Regional Interagency Steering Committee Meeting, Chicago, Illinois

On March 1-2, 2000, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Region V, Regional Interagency Steering Committee (RISC) meeting was held in the FEMA, Region V, Chicago Regional Operations Center. U.S. EPA Region 5 participants were Glenn Cekus (Office of Chemical Emergency Preparedness and Prevention), Ann Whelan (Oil Planning and Response Section), and Tom Geishecker (Emergency Response Branch). On March 1, 2000, agenda topics addressing Year 2000 Compliant after-action issues, counter-terrorism, and the year's natural hazards forecast were covered. Ms. Whelan gave a presentation on U.S. EPA's Environmental and Economic Sensitivity Mapping project and Mr. Cekus provided the U.S. EPA update on Federal Response Plan (FRP) activity. FEMA advised the Federal Agencies that the Region's Annex to the FRP was to be updated this year. U.S. EPA will be required to update the Emergency Support Function 10, Hazardous Materials, Supplement to the above annex.

On March 2, 2000, Tom Geishecker and Glenn Cekus participated in a consequence management tabletop exercise presented by a representative of the National Transportation Safety Board. The scenario involved an aircraft crash near Midway Airport that, in addition to the aircraft occupants, impacted area residents, telephone communications, sewer lines, electrical power, and several other services in the area. Some of the issues that may have involved U.S. EPA were assisting local responders addressing jet fuel in sewer lines and cleaning up the spilled fuel from the ground surface.

Contact: Glenn Cekus (312-353-6449)

Crisis Communication Conference Call, Department of Veterans Affairs, Chicago, Illinois

Ginny Narsete of the Emergency Response Branch conducted a one-hour national conference call with the Department of Veterans Affairs, Region 6, on Crisis Communications, which was entitled "Connecting with the Community and the Media". The discussion topics related to working with multi-government agencies in responding to national and regional disasters, including Hurricane Floyd and the most recent Hickory Hills Cleanup of the house filled with chemicals and explosives. Ms. Narsete's topics also included how to handle a media ambush, disseminating public information, the importance of

internal and external communications during a crisis, and partnering with other government agencies.

Contact: Ginny Narsete (312-886-4359)

Participation, Allen Park High School: 2000 Career Odyssey Fair, Allen Park, Michigan

On February 17, 2000, On-Scene Coordinator Kurt Grunert participated in Allen Park High School's 2000: Career Odyssey Fair located in Allen Park, Michigan. The fair provided high school seniors with information about career opportunities in the environmental industry.

Contact: Kurt Grunert (734-692-7684)

cc: Steve Herman (OECA)
Barry Breen (OECA)
Tim Fields (OSWER)
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Larry Zaragoza (OSWER)
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